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Stephan W. Currie, Executive Director

May 8, 2023

State Rep. Kara Hope
Chair
House Criminal Justice Committee
Room 519, House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Chair Hope and members of the Committee:

The Michigan Association of Counties (MAC), representing the state's 83 counties and 619 county commissioners, expresses its strong opposition to House Bill 4438, now before the committee. This legislation proposes to expand binding arbitration beyond police and fire labor bargaining units to county correctional officers. Our association has long opposed any expansion of Public Act 312 to other bargaining units due to the cost of the process, the long-term liabilities associated with third-party decisions and the unequal treatment such a system provides to those bargaining units.

MAC recognizes the many challenges our county correctional officers face on duty and does not dispute they should be granted benefits similar to those for police and firefighters. The problem lies in the fact that Public Act 312 and any expansion of binding arbitration will be damaging to the county. Furthermore, the Michigan Public Employment Relations Act already sufficiently provides for correctional officers' bargaining rights, without tying the hands of the county in binding arbitration.

The addition of correctional officers would serve only to make several existing problems worse for county governments that already are struggling to balance limited resources with the service demands of their constituents. Employee salaries and benefits are a significant portion of every county's budget, and a county should be in control of setting them as they see fit. Allowing an arbitrator to make decisions on benefits that have long fiscal tails has exacerbated funding problems with post-employment benefit programs.

Beyond the financial implications HB 4438 would have, this measure would strike another blow against the principle of local control, a principle that this Legislature once held in high regard.

We respectfully urge the committee to reject the bill.

Respectfully yours,

Madeline Fata
Governmental Affairs Associate